

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CU-02 NIC-01 SCCT-01 AID-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /072 W

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R 060905Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4654

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 127

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EAID, LT

SUBJECT: STUDENT UNREST AT UNIVERSITY

REF: MASERU 97

1. SUMMARY: STUDENTS AT UBLS ROMA CAMPUS STILL ON STRIKE FEBURARY 5. ON CAMPUS, FACULTY AND STUDENT GROUPS HAVE BEEN MEETING TO DISCUSS STUDENT DEMANDS. OFF CAMPUS, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER(AND FORMER UBLS PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR) JOEL MOITSE HAS BEEN SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND LAUNCHING VERBAL ATTACKS AGAINST UBLS VICE-CHANCELLOR CYRIL ROGERS. LESOTHO GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN HANDS-OFF APPROACH, PERHAPS IN HOPE THAT STUDENT STRIKE WILL HASTEN END OF ROGERS' TENURE. END SUMMARY.

2. AS OF FEBRUARY 5 STUDENTSHAVE NOT BACKED OFF FROM DEMANDS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION ON THEIR COMPLAINTS AGAINST UBLS

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ADMINISTRATION ALTHOUGH SOME STUDENTS SAID TO WANT TO

RETURN TO CLASSES. THERE HAS BEEN NO VIOLENCE BUT STUDENTS HAVE FORCED CONFRONTATIONS WITH ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS THAT COULD HAVE LED TO VIOLENCE.

3. EMBASSY HAS OBTAINED LIST OF STUDENT DEMANDS PRESENTED JANUARY 27 WHICH STUDENTS APPARENTLY STILL CLAIM ARE NOT NEGOTIABLE. DEMANDS ALMOST COMPLETELY CONCERNED WITH FACULTY AND STAFF MATTERS. HOTTEST ISSUE IS CALL FOR IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION OF BRITISH MATHEMATICS LECTURER NAMED AMBROSE WHOM STUDENTS CHARGE CONSPIRED TO PREVENT SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN NAMED MOHAMED FROM CHAIRING MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT. OF LONGER-TERM NATURE, STUDENTS DEMAND REPRESENTATION IN ALL FACULTY MEETINGS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF STUDENT PANEL TO INTERVIEW APPLICANTS FOR FACULTY POSITIONS. NEW AND ADDITIONAL DEMAND IS RESIGNATION OF VICE-CHANCELLOR ROGERS.

4. WHILE SEVERAL FACULTY MEMBERS SAID TO BE READY TO LEAVE IF AMBROSE FORCED OUT, ACADEMIC STAFF ASSOCIATION AT ROMA HAS ISSUED STATEMENT MODERATELY CRITICAL OF UBLS ADMINISTRATION AND, WITH EXCEPTION OF AMBROSE'S IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL, SUPPORTIVE OF STUDENT DEMANDS.

5. MOITSE ENTERED FRAY JANUARY 30 WITH RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND CALLING THEIR ACTIONS AND DEMANDS "MATURE". IN SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS, HIS POSITION HAS BEEN EMBELLISHED BY RACIST OVERTONES AND PERSONAL ATTACKS ON ROGERS.

6. IT APPEARS QUITE LIKELY MOITSE IS PRIME INSTIGATOR OF STUDENT UNREST, WITH STUDENT DEMANDS TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH ROGERS' RETURN FROM OVERSEAS TRIP. WE BELIEVE MOITSE MIGHT WELL HAVE ENCOURAGED PRESENT DIFFICULTIES BECAUSE OF ANIMOSITIES HE DEVELOPED TOWARD ROGERS AND OTHER EXPATRIATE UBLS PERSONNEL DURING HIS TOUR THERE AS PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR. MOITSE INFORMED CHARGE HE HAS SPOKEN OUT ON UBLS PROBLEM WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION BY PRIME MINISTER, AND HIS ACTIONS HAVE REPORTEDLY CAUSED PRIME MINISTER AND EDUCATION MINISTER CONSIDERABLE CONCERN. LESOTHO GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN HANDS-OFF APPROACH WHICH OF COURSE DOES NOTHING TO DISCOURAGE STUDENTS. GOL KNOWN TO CONFIDENTIAL

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BE HOSTILE TO ROGERS WHOM THEY HAVE BEEN OBLIGED TO CONTINUE TO ACCEPT BECAUSE OF DESIRES OF BOTSWANA AND SWAZILAND. GOL MAY SEE IN PRESENT FRAY OPPORTUNITY TO GET OTHER TWO COUNTRIES TO AGREE ON ROGERS' REMOVAL.

7. ROGERS REPLIED TO STUDENTS' POINTS ON FEBRUARY 2, EXPLAINING REASONS FOR DEPARTURE OF NON-WHITE FACULTY MEMBERS MOHAMED AND NCGOBO AND PROMISING UNIVERSITY COUNCIL CON-

SIDERATION OF MOST STUDENT DEMANDS. HE ANNOUNCED AMBROSE HAD VOLUNTARILY AGREED TO SUSPEND HIMSELF TO LESSEN CONTROVERSY BUT THAT NO PERMANENT ACTION COULD BE TAKEN UNTIL THREE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED HAD ESTABLISHED COMMISSION OF INQUIRY.

8. COMMISSION OF INQUIRY WOULD REQUIRE PARTICIPATION BY BOTSWANA AND SWAZILAND BUT THERE SO FAR NO INDICATION OF THEIR THINKING ON PROBLEMS AT ROMA. WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFO EMBASSIES MBABANE AND GABORONE CAN PROVIDE ON HOST GOVERNMENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD STRIKE. HAUGHT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MASERU00127
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750043-0857
From: MASERU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750267/aaaachxt.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MASERU 97
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <10 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STUDENT UNREST AT UNIVERSITY
TAGS: PINS, EAID, LT, UBLs
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006